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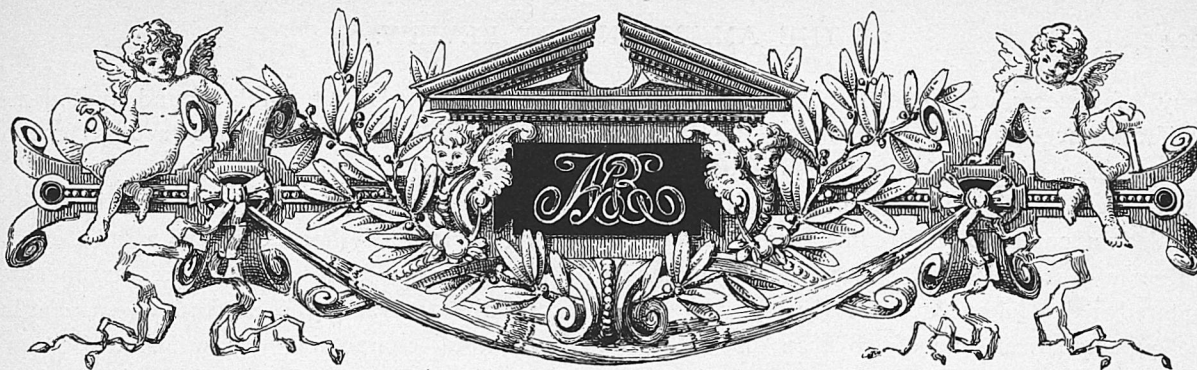
DAN. HUNTINGTON. PINX.

J. W. CASILEAR. SC.

## A SIBYL.

Estes & Lauriat, Publishers.



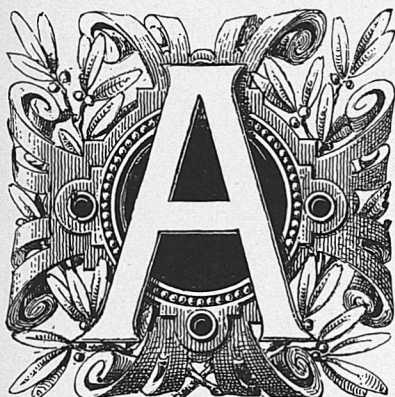


DESIGNED FOR THE AMERICAN ART REVIEW BY LUDVIG S. IPSSEN.

## DANIEL HUNTINGTON,

PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN.

### FIRST ARTICLE.



DESIGNED BY L. S. IPSSEN.

AN American artist was the creator of modern historical painting. When Benjamin West, in the year 1770, contrary to the urgent advice of Sir Joshua Reynolds, resolved to clothe the actors in his picture, *The Death of General Wolfe*, in the costume of their time, and to omit the angels and genii that usually filled the sky in similar compositions, he broke with a tradition which had hitherto been held wellnigh inviolate. The so-called historical compositions of previous ages, with their figures in classical costume, or in no costume at all, accompanied by the winged beings already alluded to, were in truth nothing but allegory. There may be some significance in the fact, that this important step towards realism was first boldly taken by a son of the New World, which thus exercised an intellectual influence over its ancestor, for which it has as yet received hardly sufficient credit. But it is strange that West should have found so few followers among his countrymen, and that Americans, while they can justly lay claim to priority in the development of art in this direction, should have done so little to swell the ranks of the historical painters. For the American artists who are really entitled to be classed with these painters are so few, that they can readily be counted upon the fingers.

Among these few Mr. Huntington occupies a prominent place, and for this reason alone his career would be likely to excite interest. But the interest is increased from the fact that in point of time he occupies a position in American art on the boundary between the school of the past and the school of the future now clamoring for recognition. The associate and fellow-student of the founders of the middle period, he continues to preside over the National Academy of Design while it is receiving accessions from the ranks of those who call themselves reformers, and continues to paint some of his best portraits, while many of his former colleagues are in their graves. And in still another respect has Mr. Huntington's career been exceptional. The life of the professional artist is generally stormy. More than most men he is forced to struggle with a destiny wanton and capricious, while the temperament usually accorded to the genuine painter or sculptor is precisely of a nature that unfits him to overcome the obstacles in the

way of success. Symmetry of character, on the other hand, is but rarely found united to uniform success throughout a long life. Happily, Mr. Huntington is one of the favored few to whom these advantages have been vouchsafed.

Daniel Huntington was born in the year 1816, in the city of New York, where his family resided in comfortable circumstances. According to the custom of those days, when the curriculum of our colleges was scarcely in advance of that of our academies of the present time, he entered Yale College at an early age, and his conduct while attending the institution—as might be expected from one of his even disposition and high moral character—was sufficiently exemplary. It seems strange, therefore, to have to record that he was rusticated at the end of Freshman year. This, however, let us hasten to add, was not owing to any disgraceful act on his part, but because, inspired by *esprit de corps*, he declined to testify against one of his classmates. By the advice of his friends, his term of rustication being ended, young Huntington decided not to return to Yale College, but entered Hamilton College instead. In the language of religious cant, this circumstance had a providence in it. It seems that the young student had already shown a turn for art by numerous pencil drawings, including caricatures, which attracted the attention of his fellow-collegians, and this natural bias soon became a controlling impulse. Shortly after he entered Hamilton College, Charles Loring Elliott also came to Clinton, where the College is located, to try his fortunes there. This was before Elliott had settled in New York city, and while he was engaged in his first struggles for fame. He was then painting portraits at eight dollars apiece, or thirty dollars for six. The students availed themselves of this admirable opportunity, and in this way Mr. Huntington made the acquaintance of a man of genius, destined to become one of the greatest portrait-painters of the age. Under his influence, at the time when the character is crystallizing into definite form, the student from Yale found that what had been with him thus far a vague instinct became a clear and earnest aspiration. He passed his leisure moments in the painter's humble studio, fascinated by the fund of anecdote which rendered the society of Elliott so attractive, and listening to the art maxims of one whose mind was already ripe with a perception of the truths which underlie the highest art.

Naturally, the next step was to take lessons from Elliott, and thus began Mr. Huntington's initiation into art. His first composition, *Ichabod Crane flogging a Scholar*, was painted soon after. At this time he also painted a *Portrait of a Freshman*, in which the realistic representation of a bookcase aroused the admiration of the village connoisseurs. In the broad farcical style of *Ichabod Crane* were also two caricatures, or colossal heads, *Rage* and *Laughter*, painted by the young artist on the walls of a room at Hamilton. They gave intense satisfaction to the wilder spirits of the College, and perhaps for that reason were finally effaced by the command of Prof. Penny. It is somewhat singular that an artist of so serious a turn of mind should have begun his professional career by designs provocative of mirth and insubordination.

But while the class professor looked askance at these rude efforts, he did not fail to perceive that the true vocation of his pupil was art. He therefore kindly advised him to leave Hamilton College, and complete his academic studies at the University of New York, then recently established, as there, while pursuing his collegiate course, he could be brought under art influences as in no other place in the Union. Accepting the suggestion, young Huntington was soon settled in one of the ample apartments of the castle-like University Building on Washington Square, which has since been enriched by literary and artistic associations such as no other edifice in the country can boast of. Not only have a number of scientific and legal celebrities either taught or been educated there, but its sombre corridors and Gothic chambers have been the haunt of many who have achieved repute with the brush and the pen. If the lancet-shaped windows and groined arches supported by angels are not of the noblest material or the purest style of architecture, they are yet admirably adapted to inspire the imaginative mind in the twilight hours. The walls of the ancient-looking pile have rang with the mirth and riot of the

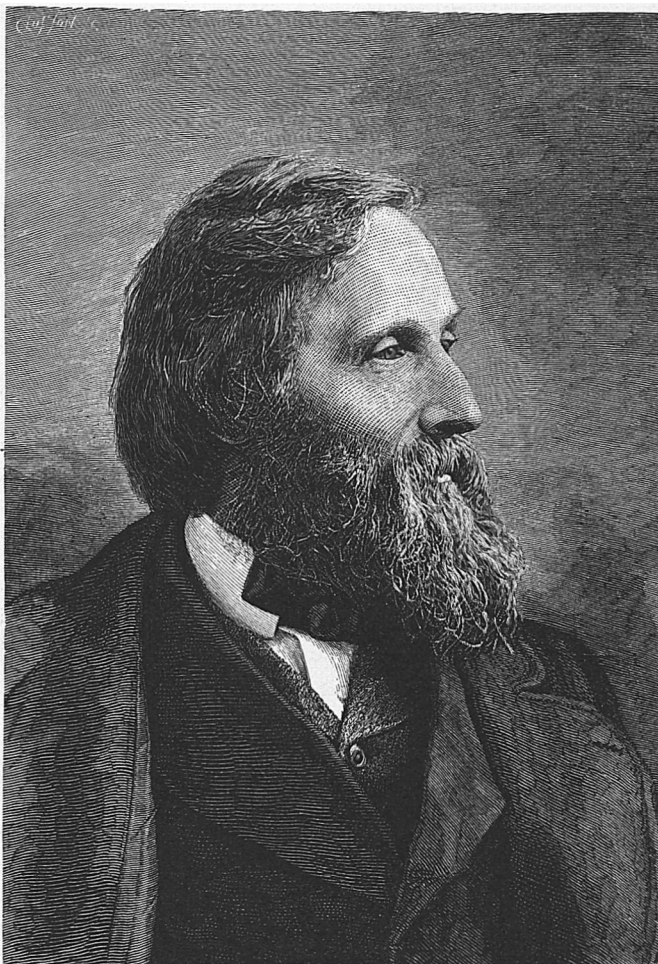


banquet; they have also witnessed the despair of disappointed expectations, of hope long deferred,—the dawning success of those destined to prosperity, and the last pangs of the suicide. There Morse, Eastman Johnson, Inness, Winslow Homer, and others, have painted; there Winthrop smoked and dreamed, and composed those enthusiastic romances that found no publisher until he who wrote them had fallen on the battle-field in Virginia.

At the time Mr. Huntington entered the University, S. F. B. Morse, famous later in life as a great electrician, had his studio in the building, where he painted portraits and gave lessons in art. No one in America was at that time better informed in regard to the technical requirements of art, not only in painting, but also in sculpture, than Morse, and some of the works he executed in England showed a thorough perception of principles, and considerable power in seizing character. But, after all, it was the analytical rather than the creative element that predominated in his mind. Logic rather than inspiration guided his brush, and it is evident that in his case destiny was not unjust when she directed his attention to science. As an art instructor, however, Morse was admirably qualified, and it was a fortunate circumstance for young Huntington that he was admitted to his studio as a pupil, although the master was even then devoting much time to philosophic experiments. But his scientific tendencies did not prevent him from tempering his instructions by a tone of Christian morality, in accordance with the spirit planted in this country by the Pilgrim Fathers, and which at that time pervaded American society more decidedly than in our own day. It was in Morse's studio that Mr. Huntington painted *The Bar Room Politicians*, and *A Toper Asleep*, as well as his first landscape.

Having finished his studies with Morse, our young artist was also favored with the instructions of Inman, and he was thus well equipped for the arduous career he had chosen,—a pursuit in which the prizes are won by no faint heart or lukewarm love. His academic studies having likewise been completed, he established himself in a studio in Greenwich Lane, now the beginning of Ninth Avenue. To this locality Morse had already preceded him, having changed his quarters from the University Building to a house next to that occupied by Dunlap, the painter and writer.

It was not long before Mr. Huntington began to receive commissions for portraits at five dollars each, a sum which is not quite so meagre as it appears, as five dollars then were equal in purchasing power to at least ten dollars to-day. The genius of Doughty, Cole, and Durand was at this time arousing people of taste to a perception of the importance of landscape art and the beauty of the scenery of this continent. It was doubtless this circumstance which suggested to a gentleman who was speculating in land in the vicinity of Verplanck's Point that a



DANIEL HUNTINGTON, P. N. A.

ENGRAVED BY W. B. CLOSSON.—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY SARONY.

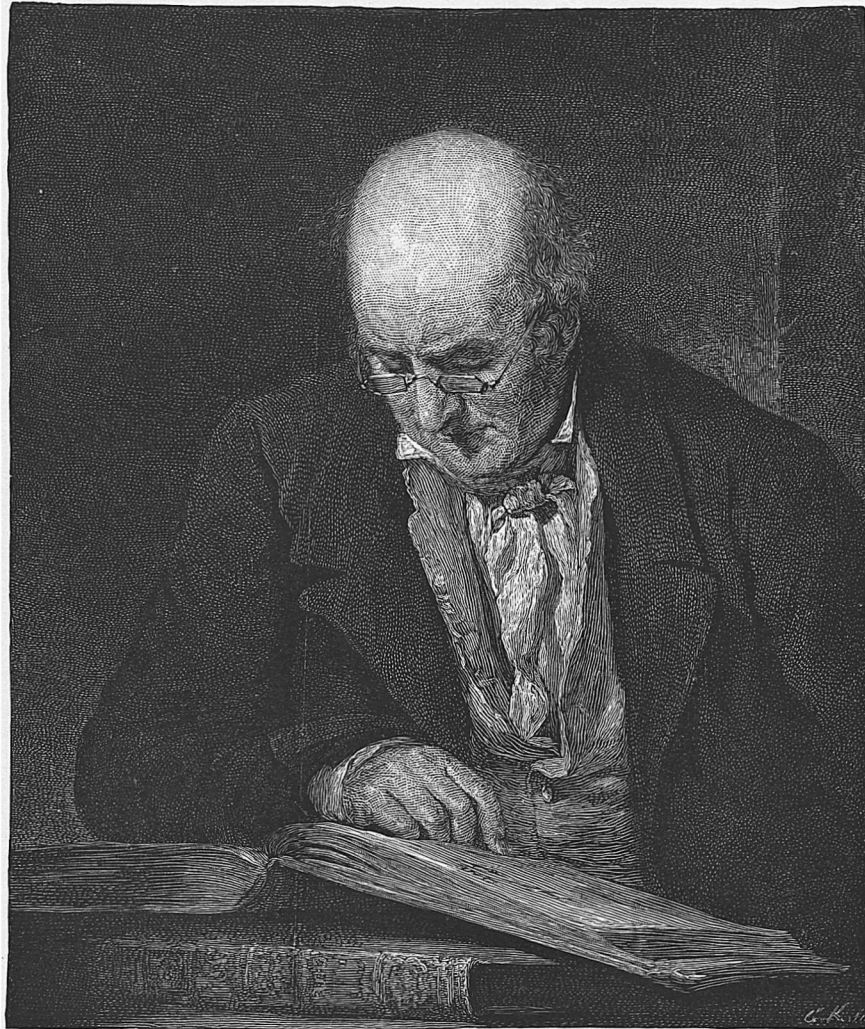
series of paintings representing the scenery of that lovely neighborhood would aid him in advertising the value of his property. Having observed the young artist "forwarding" the backgrounds in the portraits of a prominent painter of the day, he commissioned him to paint a number of views near Verplanck's, and thus was Mr. Huntington led into landscape art, which he has pursued at intervals during his life with pleasing effect, if not always with marked originality. The portraits he painted at this period include the picturesque likeness of his father engaged in reading, which has been engraved for this article by Mr. Kruell.

In 1839 Mr. Huntington realized what was then, and is now, the dream of the American artist, and sailed for Europe. Italy was the objective point, and there he resided for a twelve-month. In Rome he was associated in bachelor quarters with Terry, Henry Peters Gray, and other American painters of more or less note, with whom he devoted four evenings in the week to studying from life. At the same time they had the benefit of lessons in painting and perspective from Ferreri, who, although an engraver by profession, excelled also as a draughtsman. It may be added here, that Gray, before going to Rome, had already begun painting as a pupil of Huntington in New York.

It is easy to see that to an artist of a spiritual turn of mind like Mr. Huntington the religious paintings of the earlier and later Italian schools would have special attractions. His taste at this critical period of life was thus definitively shaped, and through all his subsequent work we trace the results of those early influences, both in his composition and in his color. It is often urged by our older artists, that the younger painters who are now introducing the methods of Munich and Paris into our studios are innovators with little original force, because foreign influences are apparent in their style. But they are doing no more than has been already done by many of our leading painters, from the time when West and Trumbull and Stüart sought instruction in England, and Cole and Vanderlyn in Italy. While the art of a country is in its infancy, such influences always exercise more or less power in its development, and it does not necessarily imply the absence of great ability, when an artist supplements home study with foreign inspiration. Possibly, therefore, the opposition which these "innovators" meet with has its origin not so much in an aversion to their foreign methods as in the conservative sentiment which views anything new with suspicion, and forces it to prove its merit by overcoming obstacles. It may be well to bear this consideration in mind, although it is not necessary—as we certainly do not—to accept the opinions and works of the "new men" without reserve.

During his first visit to Italy Mr. Huntington painted some of his most notable pictures, one of which, *The Florentine Girl*, now hanging in the Academy of Fine Arts at Philadelphia, was engraved for *The Gift*, by Cheney. It is really the portrait of a beautiful model from whom J. Freeman afterwards painted his *Sleeping Psyche*. The same model posed also for the *Sibyl*, an ideal composition which very fairly represents Mr. Huntington's artistic abilities. Simple in arrangement, it is all the more effective for that reason, and it has the grace and dignity which is characteristic of many of the ideal heads painted by this artist. In this attractive face we seem to find the type of beauty most affected by Mr. Huntington, and reappearing, with slight variations, in many of his works. When the Art Union was dissolved by the mandate of the courts, on the ground of being a lottery, it was resolved to devote the assets of the association to the purchase of a gallery of paintings exclusively by American artists. The *Sibyl* was the first painting selected for this purpose. It was, however, also the last, as it was soon after decided to expend the \$10,000 on hand in the erection of the picture gallery over the library of the New York Historical Society, where the painting may now be seen, together with the pictures belonging to the Bryan Collection. It has unfortunately been much injured by the varnish with which it was covered by Mr. Ridner, the secretary of the Art Union, but there is an excellent engraving of it by Casilear.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This engraving is reprinted herewith. It will not be necessary to apologize for its republication, as the readers of the REVIEW will be glad to possess a copy of so good a piece of American engraving. Besides, having been originally issued a generation ago, it will be new to many. The impressions show that the plate is still in excellent condition.—EDITOR.



D. HUNTINGTON, PINX.

G. KRUELL, SC.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S FATHER.



Another important composition painted by Mr. Huntington at this time, *The Christian Prisoners*, illustrates the persecution of the first Roman converts to Christianity. Mr. Huntington himself has described it as follows:—"In the background will be seen part of a Pagan statue, to worship which an idolater is vainly urging a young female. A mother draws her child near, and looks beseechingly to heaven. The man chained in the foreground is bent in hopeless sorrow. The *ἰχθύς* (fish) scratched upon a stone indicates the firm adherence of the sufferers to their faith,—thus secretly expressed by a cipher whose letters form the initials of the Greek for 'Jesus Christ—of God the Son—Saviour.'" The influence of Overbeck, which was then still potent on the Continent, seems to us to be traceable in this and similar compositions by Mr. Huntington.

After his return to America in 1841, Mr. Huntington began the well-known picture entitled *Mercy's Dream*, which showed that he was by no means servilely dependent upon foreign influences in his work. His most important ideal composition, this painting at once gave him a place by himself, similar to that of Allston in the art of the previous generation, and of Cole in contemporary landscape art. It is probably the best known of his works, and no other painting of his has done more to establish his reputation. Much of its success is no doubt owing to the fact that it was the product of a sudden inspiration. When the artist had made the sketch in charcoal on the canvas, Inman happened to come to his studio, and, with the enthusiastic manner characteristic of his impulsive nature, exclaimed: "Don't you alter it! You never can get the same expression again!" Mr. Huntington followed his advice, and laid in the color on the face so thinly as to be able to preserve the original drawing. What is lost by this process in some respects, is gained in others. The technician may criticise the absence of "solid painting," while the idealist is moved by the noble expression which the striving for mere technical excellence might have obscured. The attitude of Mercy, suiting her action to the beatific vision that kindles her fancy, the pure and attractive features of the maiden, the successful foreshortening of the angel gracefully poised in the air as he places the starry diadem on the brow of the sleeping saint, and the tender radiance of dawn just breaking over the shadowy landscape, combine to make a work that is pleasing both as an artistic conception, and as expressing the aspirations of the Christian soul. It is not strange, therefore, that, in a community deeply religious as ours was at that time, and just awakening to a yearning for forms of art and beauty, *Mercy's Dream* should at once have won popular esteem. The picture has not only been engraved on steel by Cheney, and for the Philadelphia Art Union in mezzotint, but the artist has also executed several replicas for private galleries. The original was owned by the late Henry C. Cary, who bequeathed it to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. One of the replicas, painted for a special exhibition, is now in the Corcoran Gallery at Washington, and a third copy, executed from memory for Olden Barlow, the engraver, during Mr. Huntington's second visit to England, is owned by Mr. Marshall O. Roberts, of New York.

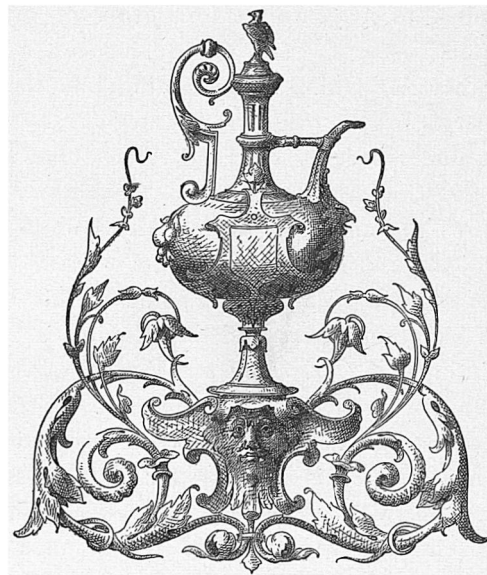
In color, *Mercy's Dream* is more agreeable than some of his other works belonging to the same period. The "rosy red" of the fingers and complexion is soft and natural, but that Homeric tint is lost in such paintings as *Christiana and her Children in the Valley of Humiliation*, the prevailing brick red in which is offensive to the eye. It may be, however, that the immoderate use of bitumen or other browns has altered the original color.

In 1842 Mr. Huntington nearly lost his eyesight for a year, and was, of course, obliged to abstain altogether from work. The year following, his eyes having regained their strength, he revisited England, where he remained a year. He there made the acquaintance of Holman Hunt, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite school, and through his influence was introduced to the famous Kensington Life School, a sort of artistic close corporation, to which only those who could control certain mysterious influences were then admitted. Here he was associated with Rossetti, Mulready, and others of both the new and the old schools; but he does not appear to have been as much affected by the noisy enthusiasm of the *soi-disant* reformers as

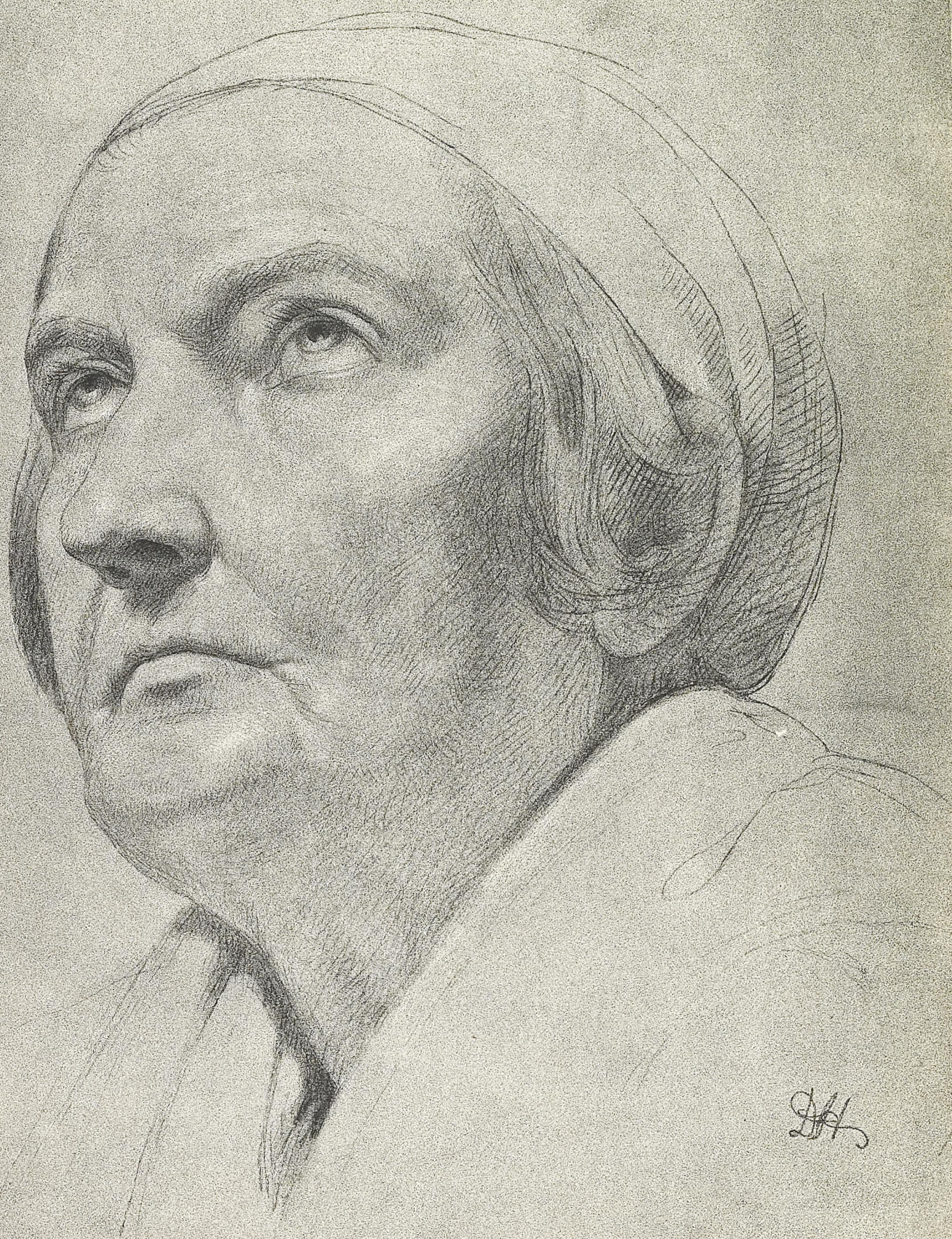
by the example of the artists of the intermediate rank represented by such men as Leslie. These influences are doubtless apparent to a certain degree in the subjects drawn from English history at a later date. From England Mr. Huntington went a second time to Italy, and to that trip we owe *The Communion of the Sick*, one of his most important productions. It was suggested by the death of the artist James De Veaux, who died at Rome in 1844. The solemn ceremonies attending his last hours made a strong impression on Mr. Huntington's mind, and the result was the fine composition which represents the last communion as administered in the infancy of the Church. The aged parents, the wife and the child, are gathered around the couch of the dying man. The venerable bishop is bestowing the benediction, while the deacon stands near at hand with the holy cup. Family retainers absorbed in sympathetic sorrow complete the group, and a twilight landscape is seen through an arch. Another work, painted at the same time, is *The Italian Girl*, carrying a vase of water upon her head. It was engraved by Cheney for *The Gift*.

The study for a head in *The Communion of the Sick*, which accompanies this article in a careful reproduction, shows Mr. Huntington at his best. The workmanship is faultless, the modelling excellent, the expression well given. In this last respect it may boldly be affirmed that this *Study* is considerably in advance of much of the work done by our younger artists, who, however admirable their productions may be, seldom penetrate beyond the outward form, whose realistic representation seems to absorb all their powers. In point of *technique*, also, this head is well calculated to demonstrate the difference between the various currents of thought now agitating the artistic world. It represents the academic traditions, while the striking studies by Mr. Chase, published in this REVIEW some months ago, exemplify the radical tendencies of the new generation. A direct comparison of the two styles, which the reader may easily institute, will do more to make clear the divergency of the tendencies they represent, than a whole chapter of philosophical deductions.

S. G. W. BENJAMIN.







D. HUNTINGTON, DEL.

CHAS. METTAIS, FAC-SIM.

# STUDY

FOR A HEAD IN "THE COMMUNION OF THE SICK."